

Defenders of Wildlife

Subsistence Hunting and the PAW Act

Don't be fooled



Many Alaska Natives and rural subsistence hunters rely on wild game as a primary and healthy source of protein. State officials are exploiting this traditional practice in an attempt to legitimize the aerial gunning of wolves. Do not be fooled -- aerial gunning is **not** about feeding Alaskans.

The new found concern about subsistence hunters is more opportunistic than sincere -- especially since in recent years state wildlife policies have routinely favored out-of-state and urban hunting interests over rural and Native subsistence hunters. For example:

“Wolves are a valued resource on which trappers and subsistence hunters depend.”-- **Alaska Hunter, Nick Jans.**

- **Subsistence hunters are forced to compete with out-of-state hunters.** Even where the state contends there are limited prey resources and where they are conducting aerial gunning, Alaska is selling hundreds of hunting permits for moose and caribou to out-of-state hunters who compete directly with rural subsistence hunters and Alaska Natives. Recently, hunts open to out-of-state hunters surpassed their quotas, causing several federal subsistence hunts – hunts open only to resident hunters who have documented a reliance on the local game – to be closed.
- **Rural subsistence and Alaska Native hunters are forced to compete with urban hunters.** The state officially opposes “rural preference,” which would give rural subsistence hunters priority access to moose and caribou over urban hunters who have access to supermarkets.
- **Priority hunting areas for Alaska Natives have not been taken up in predator control areas.** The state can designate “customary and traditional uses,” which provide priority for Alaska Natives in traditional hunting areas. However, wildlife officials have largely refused to even consider this designation in predator control areas, leaving Native hunters to compete with other hunters.

“The wolf is a vital part of Native Alaskan culture ... What the state government is doing, is upsetting the natural balance of things.” -- **Lorraine Ramsey, Alaska Native.**

Aerial gunning is not about protecting subsistence hunters. It is about artificially inflating prey species to unsustainable levels. And, it's disingenuous to suggest the PAW Act would harm subsistence hunters. If wildlife populations are threatened, the bill explicitly allows states to proactively use aerial gunning to protect game – and ultimately the subsistence hunters who depend on it.